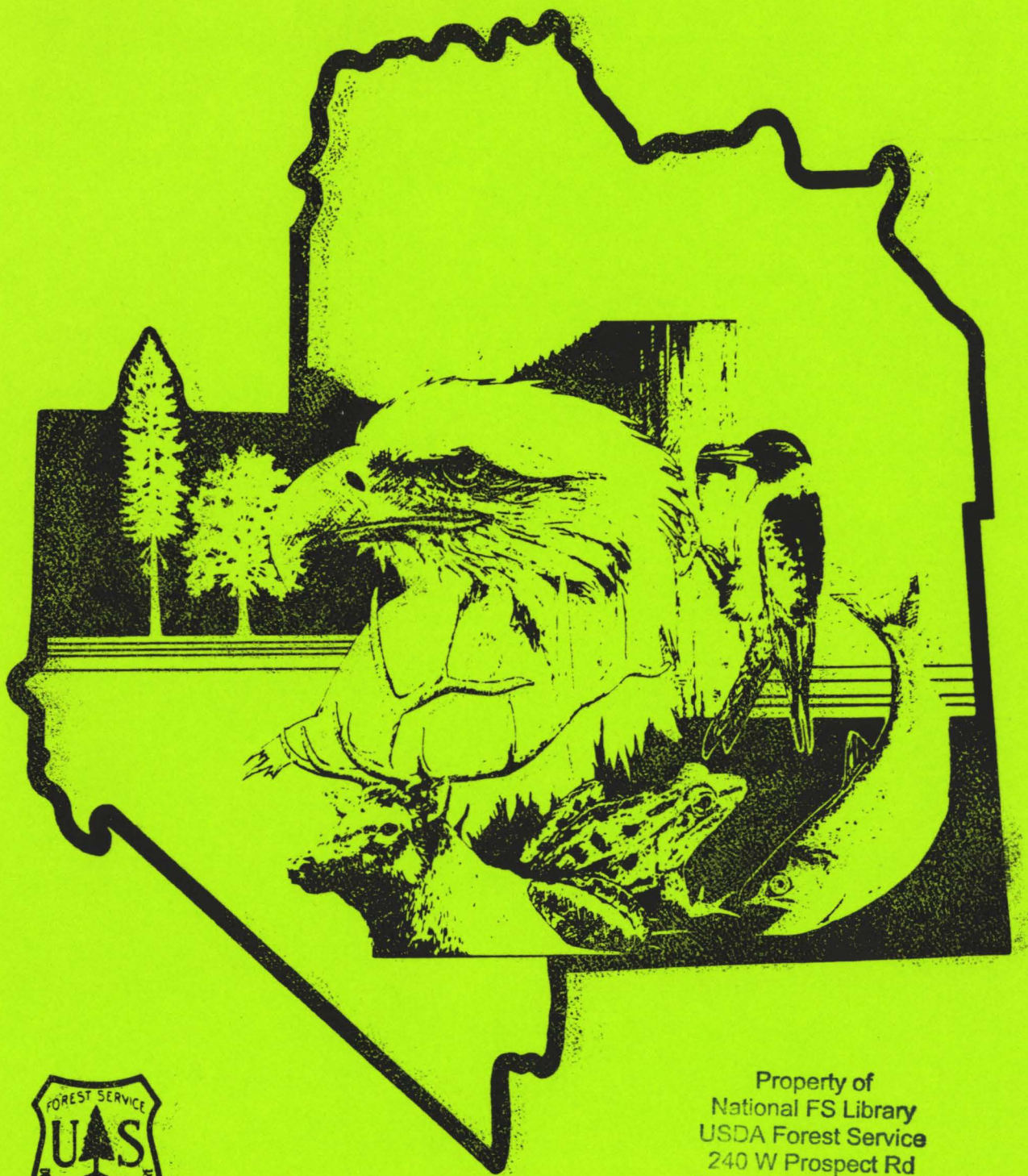
SD
11
.R4

Fisheries and wildlife management...

REGION 4 WILDLIFE AND FISH PROGRAM REVIEW ACTION PLAN

March 1987



Property of
National FS Library
USDA Forest Service
240 W Prospect Rd
Fort Collins CO 80526

INTERMOUNTAIN REGION

FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

PROGRAM REVIEW

INTERMOUNTAIN REGION

ACTION PLAN

1986

TEAM LEADER: Tom Roederer, Deputy Regional Forester, Resources, R-4

TEAM MEMBERS: Bill Burbridge, Director, Fisheries and Wildlife Management, R-4
Bob Nelson, Director, Wildlife and Fisheries, WO
Jim Nelson, Forest Supervisor, Toiyabe National Forest
Joe Harn, Director, Fisheries and Wildlife Management, R-5 (retired)
Darrell Nish, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
Carl Nellis, Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Duane Erickson, Nevada Department of Wildlife
Dr. Fred Wagner, Utah State University

Approved for J. S. TIXIER
Regional Forester

Date 4/3/87

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

III. COMMENDATIONS

IV. FINDINGS, SELECTED ALTERNATIVES, AND ACTION ITEMS

INTERMOUNTAIN REGION

FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE PROGRAM REVIEW

1986

I. INTRODUCTION

Wildlife and fish are very important resources in the Intermountain Region. The 32 million acres of National Forest System lands in five states offer an immense variety of wildlife and fish habitat for a broad spectrum of game and non-game wildlife and fish. Habitat improvement possibilities are almost limitless. The Intermountain Region is home to the grizzly bear, grey wolf, and bald eagle among species considered threatened in the United States and contains some of the world's premier anadromous fish habitat considered vital to the continued existence of the last remaining wild stocks and the welfare of the Pacific salmon industry. The Lahonton and Paiute trout, also on the threatened species list, occupy a large portion of National Forest streams in Nevada. Other game and non-game species are found in abundance on most National Forest System lands in the Region.

The National Forests in the Intermountain Region also contain some of the premier hunting and fishing opportunities in the United States. Each state fish and wildlife agency offers unique hunting and fishing combinations for a large segment of local and non-resident hunters and fishermen. Cooperation and coordination among Forest Service, state, and other Federal wildlife and fish agencies is vital to ensure wildlife and fish resources on National Forest System lands are managed in conjunction with other uses to achieve increasing public demands.

Public interest in National Forest wildlife and fish management is high. There are numerous interest groups active in the Region in support of improved National Forest habitat management to enhance fish and game populations and opportunities. Forest Land Management planning efforts reflect this growing interest. It is obvious that the interest will intensify in the future. Because of its large geographic area and many diverse landforms, the Intermountain Region offers more opportunities for wildlife and fish habitat management than probably anywhere else in the United States.

How well is National Forest management responding to these opportunities and how are managers responding to this growing public interest in National Forest wildlife and fish habitat management? To answer these questions the Intermountain Region established a diverse team to conduct a comprehensive Program Review of the wildlife and fish program. Because state fish and wildlife agencies are partners with the Forest Service as managers of wildlife and fish resources, members of three state fish and wildlife agencies were included as full members of the Review. In addition, the academic community was represented by an Assistant Dean from the College of Natural Resources of a leading Intermountain Region University.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The review was conducted in two sections: an interview portion where representatives of interest groups, user groups, Forest Service and other Federal Agency employees, and State Fish and Game personnel were asked their opinion of how well wildlife and fish management was progressing in the Region; and a field review section where projects and habitat management were reviewed in the field. By splitting the members into several teams, extensive coverage of the Region was accomplished. During the interview section, over 200 individuals were interviewed in all 5 states and 11 National Forests were visited. In addition, team Member Dr. Fred Wagner, conducted extensive interviews with State Fish and Game personnel as a separate effort.

The Team found that, in large measure, the Forest Service enjoys considerable respect from the public for National Forest management in the Region, but there is widespread concern that an imbalance exists between commodity and non-commodity uses of the National Forests. Interviewees expressed concern that National Forest management was still largely being driven by commodity interests such as timber and grazing and that wildlife and fish management were not equal partners in emphasis. Concern was expressed that there were not enough wildlife and fish biologists in the Region's workforce to adequately manage the resource. Commodity groups expressed some concern that increasing wildlife and fish interests would erode their business opportunities over time. Creating a better balance of management emphasis and budget levels among wildlife and fish and other uses of the National Forest loomed large in the minds of most of the publics interviewed.

The Team found that the priority and emphasis for the wildlife and fish program was insufficient for the Region as a whole and, as a result, implementation was not adequate on the ground. Articulation of what constitutes a complete wildlife and fish program was difficult to find among field personnel and there are mixed results in identifying wildlife and fish goals and objectives in most Forest plans. While the Team noted many good wildlife and fish projects on the ground, it was often difficult to determine if they were the highest priority work that should have been done. Wildlife and fish management was largely viewed as secondary to accomplishing "hard" targeted outputs such as timber sales and grazing and was often considered a constraint in project planning for other uses. Enthusiasm for the program and recognition of its values were apparent, but how to effectively translate the program to the ground was largely misunderstood.

Over the past several years, the Region has developed some very comprehensive computer software tools to analyze data as an aid to decisionmakers. These include models for fisheries, sediment, elk, grizzly bear, and macroinvertebrates, among others. However, field use of these tools was found to be mixed. In some cases, adequate computer hardware was not yet available and, in others, cost was a prohibitive factor. Many users complained about difficulty in comprehending the programs and insufficient time to master their use. Ground truthing was also identified as a problem. Value in decisionmaking was identified in some cases as questionable.

The role and participation of the wildlife and fish biologists in the Region were also examined extensively by the Team. Enthusiasm and dedication to wildlife and fish management was found throughout, but frustration and despair were also very evident. Regional biologists do not feel they are an accepted part of Management Teams and feel they are restrained from advancement both by the classification system and tradition. Concern was expressed about the loss of numerous biologists over the past several years and the fact that few biologists are in key Regional or Forest positions. The Team found that by and large the biologists lack sufficient direction from line officers in developing wildlife and fish programs and projects. Numbers of biologists on Forests relative to workload and budget was often mixed. There is no comprehensive workload analysis procedure to determine an appropriate biologist workforce relative to need or budget.

III. **COMMENDATIONS**

During the Review, the Team found numerous commendable actions on the ground that deserve mention. It should be noted that the Team visited only half of the National Forests on the ground and there are undoubtedly actions on other Forests that were not viewed by the Team. Those commendations include:

-Caribou National Forest: Aspen management, road management, and the use of prescribed fire for habitat improvement.

-Challis National Forest: Willow burning for moose habitat improvement.

-Dixie National Forest: Road management and deer winter range improvement.

-Bridger-Teton National Forest: Eagle management, road management, moose habitat improvement.

-Fishlake National Forest: Road management and aspen regeneration.

-Boise National Forest: Stream inventories and surveys, multi-year implementation schedule for fisheries.

-Sawtooth National Forest: Progress in riparian management.

And, finally, the Team appreciated the candor and hospitality exhibited by all personnel and Forests visited.

IV. FINDINGS, SELECTED ALTERNATIVE, AND ACTION ITEMS

A. FINDING 1: THE WILDLIFE AND FISH PROGRAM IS NOT RECEIVING SUFFICIENT PRIORITY IN THE REGION AND, AS A RESULT, IS NOT BEING ADEQUATELY IMPLEMENTED ON THE GROUND.

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE: IMPLEMENT ACTIONS THAT WILL RESULT IN THE WILDLIFE AND FISH PROGRAM ATTAINING PARITY WITH OTHER REGIONAL RESOURCE PROGRAMS.

ACTIONS:

	WHO	BY
1. Identify and resolve conflicting advice between the Fisheries and Wildlife Staff and Range and Watershed Staff regarding riparian ecosystem management through a jointly developed policy statement and R-4 FSM supplement.	F&WL RW	1/88
2. Assign targets to all phases of the wildlife and fish program related to each Forest's multi-year implementation schedule beginning the FY following completion of the schedule (see Action Item 5).	F&WL	3/88
3. Define a total wildlife and fish program including all its component parts in an R-4 FSM supplement (as well as in multi-year implementation schedule).	F&WL	10/87
4. Review all Forest Land and Resource Management Plans and amend, as needed, to ensure that wildlife and fish direction and objectives are well defined and understood and wildlife and fish issues are adequately addressed.	F&WL Forest Supervisors	3/88
5. Complete detailed 5-year wildlife and fisheries implementation schedules:	Forest Supervisors (F&WL)	
a. On Plans completed as of January 1, 1987		3/88
b. On Plans not completed		Within 1 year of completion
c. Coordinate resulting schedules with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies.		As developed
6. Feature wildlife and fisheries as a theme or emphasis in a future Regional Management Team meeting.	F&WL	9/88

ACTIONS:

	WHO	BY
7. Develop 10-minute video tape with Regional Forester discussing Program Review and commitment to achieving parity in wildlife and fish program. Also include in Regional Forester message for Intermountain Reporter and Regional Forester's Agenda.	F&WL	9/87
8. Develop a comprehensive workforce determination process to implement multi-year schedules.	F&WL	1/88
9. Determine the wildlife and fisheries biologist skills necessary to implement Forest Plans as part of the multi-year implementation schedules.	Forest Supervisors and F&WL	For completed schedules 1/88 as part of schedule development.
10. Develop cooperative plans with State Fish and Wildlife Agencies for road management relating to wildlife and other resource objectives.	Forest Supervisors and F&WL	9/87
11. Serve as Steering Committee member on R-4 Ecology Group and actively assist in the development of an interdisciplinary process for National Forest resource management and planning.	Dir F&WL	6/88
12. Analyze annual Regional program development and report to Regional Forester the trend in wildlife and fish budget over a 5-year period as compared with other resources and the F/WL budget.	F&WL	Annual
13. Analyze actions taken in Fisheries and Wildlife Program Review and develop brief report on Regional differences as a result of the Review and Action Plan.	F&WL	10/89

B. **FINDING 2: ALTHOUGH THE FOREST SERVICE ENJOYS A CONSIDERABLE RESPECT FROM ITS PUBLICS AND CONSTITUENCIES IN REGION 4, THERE IS WIDESPREAD PERCEPTION OF AN IMBALANCE BETWEEN EMPHASIS ON COMMODITY AND NONCOMMODITY USES OF THE FOREST.**

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE: UNDERTAKE A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EFFORT TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND CREATE A BETTER PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND ADVOCACY FOR FOREST SERVICE WILDLIFE AND FISH PROGRAMS.

ACTIONS:

	WHO	BY
1. Arrange annual field trip (two states/year) for wildlife and fish interest groups, media, academia, etc. to review wildlife and fish issues, concerns, opportunities, and accomplishments.	F&WL	9/88
2. Work with external volunteer groups to accomplish at least one wildlife and fish project per Forest per year from completed multi-year implementation schedule.	Forest Supervisors	Annually
3. Provide at least one project from F&WL implementation schedule for Forest Service volunteers to complete.	Forest Supervisors	Annually
4. Exchange personnel between the State Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Forest Service on at least one significant event per year such as pertinent review teams, training sessions, personnel selection panels, ID Team, District visit, Management Team Meeting, etc.	F&WL Forest Supervisors State Fish and Wildlife Agencies	6/87
5. Have representation at Statewide Wildlife Federation meetings. Forest Supervisors select representatives at State Forest Supervisors' meeting.	F&WL Forest Supervisors	3/87
6. Develop and implement Regional and Forest Communication and Public Involvement Plans to create a better public understanding of, and advocacy for, Forest Service wildlife and fish programs.	F&WL Forest Supervisors	1/88
7. Include State Wildlife and Fish Agencies and wildlife and fish groups as part of scoping processes on projects affecting wildlife and fish resources.	Forest Supervisors	Continuing

ACTIONS

	WHO	BY
8. Include State Wildlife and Fish Agencies as members of Interdisciplinary Teams as appropriate.	Forest Supervisors	Continuing
9. Arrange an opportunity for the exchange of personnel between the Forest Service and State Wildlife and Fish Agencies (at least one/state/year) through Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) agreement/or on ad hoc short term detail.	F&WL	9/87
10. Develop mutual wildlife and fish objectives in annual work plans between the Forest Service and State Wildlife and Fish Agencies.	Forest Supervisors F&WL	10/87
11. Evaluate current situation and develop a strategy to ensure the Region's budget submissions for wildlife and fish reflect overall Forest Plan direction and will be competitive with other Regions.	F&WL P&B	10/87
12. Develop an RO F/WL staff external contact plan which will include among other things the conduct of annual briefings with the State Wildlife and Fish Agency personnel and key constituent groups with involved Supervisors.	F&WL	Annually
13. Arrange for the short term exchange of Forest personnel and officers of F&WL interest groups for issue resolution.	F&WL	3/88
14. Forest Service and State Fish and Game Agencies jointly develop data to be used in economic evaluation of wildlife and fish outputs in RPA, FLMP's, and projects.	F&WL	3/89

C. **FINDING 3: THERE APPEARS TO BE A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AND INCONSISTENT USE OF THE WILDLIFE AND FISH HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAM.**

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE: DEVELOP A WFHR PROGRAM BASED ON THE DECISIONS AND INFORMATION NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT FOREST PLANS AND MULTI-YEAR WILDLIFE AND FISH IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULES.

ACTIONS

	WHO	BY
1. Establish a steering committee of Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, research personnel, State Agency personnel, and biologists to identify wildife and fish habitat relationships needs for effective wildife and fish management.	F&WL	10/87
a. Develop a comprehensive program and schedule for meeting identified needs.	F&WL	6/88
2. Define WFHR Program so that potential user can understand its purpose and usefulness. Include an article in Intermountain Reporter and R-4 supplement, if necessary.	F&WL	1/88
3. Involve users in the development of WFHR software packages once needs are identified through actions 1 and 2.	F&WL	3/88
4. Conduct Regional reviews of WFHR program and applications at least once every 3 years.	F&WL	9/88
5. Develop orientation program designed to acquaint managers, users, and other pertinent Agency personnel with WFHR program.	F&WL	5/88
6. Identify appropriate computer hardware needs at all administrative levels including State Agencies for effective WFHR use.	F&WL	3/88
7. As member of Steering Committee, actively assist R-4 Ecology Group in the development of an integrated resource inventory process.	Dir F&WL	3/89

D. **FINDING 4: BASED ON REGIONAL EMPHASIS, FOREST LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS, AND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS, ADEQUATE WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES SKILLS ARE NOT REFLECTED IN CURRENT LEVELS OF STAFFING. PRESENT PERSONNEL AND PLACEMENT POLICIES DO NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GM-482'S AND GM-486'S TO PARTICIPATE IN MANAGEMENT PROCESSES AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT.**

SELECTED ALTERNATIVE: OPEN PERSONNEL PROCESS TO PROVIDE EQUAL COMPETITION FOR ALL POTENTIAL CANDIDATES; DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE WORKFORCE DETERMINATION PROCESS AND MAINTAIN A WORKFORCE OF HIGHLY SKILLED WILDLIFE AND FISHERY BIOLOGISTS THAT IS COMMENSURATE WITH SKILL NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN MULTI-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE.

ACTIONS

	WHO	BY
1. Open Ranger District Resource Assistant and staff positions and Supervisor Office resource jobs as interdisciplinary to include all pertinent resource disciplines including GS-482 and GS-486.	PM Forest Supervisors	6/87
2. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester on the selection criteria and candidates for Forest wildlife and fish staff positions to ensure that individuals selected can provide leadership for wildlife and fish.	F&WL	3/87 and as opportunity occurs for duration of Action Plan.
3. Develop a policy to identify selection criteria that adequately reflects position responsibility.	PM	9/87
4. Conduct training on the orientation and integration of biologists in the Forest Service as part of R-4 Continuing Education Program.	F&WL	6/88
5. Assign entry level biologists in locations where they will be supervised by a journey level employee to ensure adequate training/mentoring/counseling.	F&WL	As assignments occur
6. Develop agreed-upon training plan to ensure that biologists are provided adequate training in order to satisfactorily progress in their job performance and career ladder.	Forest Supervisors	12/87